



*Commonwealth of Virginia*  
*Officer of the Governor*

## *Executive Order*

**NUMBER FORTY FOUR (2015)**

### **ESTABLISHING THE COMMISSION ON PAROLE REVIEW**

#### **Importance of the Commission**

Twenty years ago, the Commonwealth passed legislation eliminating discretionary parole for persons convicted of felonies. Supporters argued that abolishing parole and requiring felony offenders to serve at least 85 percent of their sentences would reduce re-offenses and recidivism while strengthening public safety.

It is time to revisit this policy. Virginia has two decades of evidence by which to assess progress and public safety outcomes and determine whether abolishing parole has achieved its intended goals. Virginia must evaluate past and present crime rates, prison populations, number of facilities, costs of incarceration and recidivism rates. Virginia must carefully examine how resources are being allocated and ensure that public dollars are spent efficiently and effectively.

Virginia should also consider modifications using evidence-based and data-driven approaches that reduce costs while improving outcomes for offenders, their families and the Commonwealth. This analysis should study whether Virginia is properly rehabilitating offenders and preparing them to re-enter communities as productive citizens. Virginia must also look at sentence lengths and determine whether long sentences are appropriate for nonviolent offenders.

#### **Establishment of the Parole Review and Update Commission**

Accordingly, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor under Article V of the Constitution of Virginia and under the laws of the Commonwealth, including but not limited to §§ 2.2-134 and 2.2-135 of the *Code of Virginia*, and subject to my continuing and ultimate authority and responsibility to act in such matters, I hereby establish the Commission on Parole Review.

## **Composition of the Commission**

The Commission will include representatives of the Virginia General Assembly, the Office of the Attorney General, relevant state agencies, advocates, community members and other organizations or individuals as assigned by the Governor. The Governor will designate the chair or co-chairs of the Commission.

## **Commission Priorities**

The Commission will address five significant priorities related to Parole Reform:

1. Conduct A Review of Previous Goals and Subsequent Outcomes The Commission shall review whether abolishing parole achieved the intended goals of preventing new felony offenses, reducing crime, and reducing recidivism. The Commission's analysis shall include, at a minimum, a quantitative analysis of pre and post-1995 trends in crime rates, incarceration rates, sentence lengths, and recidivism rates.
2. Examine the Cost of Parole Reform/Abolition The Commission shall conduct an analysis of the fiscal impact abolishing parole has had on the Commonwealth, as well as an analysis of the societal costs on communities and families from longer incarceration.
3. Evaluate the Best Practices of Other States The Commission shall research and evaluate what policies and practices have proven successful or unsuccessful in other states, and explore the application of the most successful approaches in the Commonwealth.
4. Recommend Other Mediation Strategies The Commission shall examine what other approaches could be used to achieve similar results in terms of preventing new felony offenses, reducing crime, and reducing recidivism? Virginia must pursue cost-saving, evidence-based, and multi-faceted approaches to reducing crime while also improving outcomes for offenders, families and communities.
5. Provide Recommendations to Address Public Safety Challenges The Commission shall provide its recommendations on how Virginia may best position itself to address the public safety challenges resulting from changes to parole. These final recommendations shall include any proposed legislative or executive branch actions necessary, as well as any potential private sector engagement.

## **Staffing**

Staff support for the Commission will be provided by the Office of the Governor, Office of the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security, the various secretariats and their agencies represented on the Commission and other agencies as may be designated by the Governor. It is estimated that the staff time required to complete the Commission's work will be 500 hours. All executive branch agencies will cooperate fully with the Commission and will render such assistance as may be requested by the chair or co-chairs. Direct costs for the Commission are estimated to be

\$3000. Commission members shall serve without compensation and shall receive reimbursement for expenses incurred in the discharge of their official duties.

The Commission will provide an interim report to the Governor no later than November 2, 2015, with a final report due by December 4, 2015.

**Effective Date of the Executive Order**

This Executive Order shall be effective upon its signing and shall remain in full force and effect until June 24, 2016, unless otherwise amended or rescinded by further executive order.

Given under my hand and under the Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia this 24 day of June 2015.

---

Terence R. McAuliffe, Governor

Attest:

---

Levar M. Stoney, Secretary of the Commonwealth